DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 324 115 PS 019 083

AUTHOR Lopez, Eileen B.
TITLE Dialogue Journal Writing in Kindergarten and First Grade Classrooms.
PUB DATE Feb 90
NOTE 63p.; Educational Specialist Practicum, Nova University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Elementary School Curriculum; Grade 1; Inservice Teacher Education; *Journal Writing; *Kindergarten; Parent Participation; Primary Education; *Student Improvement; *Teacher Role; *Whole Language Approach; Writing Instruction; Writing Readiness

ABSTRACT

An assistant principal for elementary instruction implemented a 10-week practicum intervention designed to use teacher in-service sessions to encourage the provision of daily opportunities for journal writing to kindergartners and first graders. In-service sessions offered: (1) an overview of highlights of related research; (2) approaches to the evaluation of student writing samples; (3) discussion of writing sample collection and evaluation; and (4) discussion of student progress in writing. Parents of participating students were invited to attend an evening orientation session in the week of the second in-service session. Included in the orientation were suggestions about activities parents could use at home to reinforce and support whole language instruction. Practicum effectiveness was assessed through classroom observations, reviews of student journals, comparison of students' pre- and post-samples, and a parent survey. Data indicated that students were provided with daily journal writing oportunities and that teachers wrote responses twice weekly. Students showed significant gains in developmental writing levels. Parental reactions to students' journal writing and invented spellings were positive. Related materials, such as surveys used and graphic analyses of pre- and post-intervention writing samples, are appended. (RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

X Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED324115

DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING IN KINDERGARTEN AND FIRST GRADE CLASSROOMS

by

Eileen B. Lopez

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Eileen B. Lopez

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

A Practicum Report

submitted to the Faculty of the Center for the Advancement of Education at Nova University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Educational Specialist

The abstract of this report may be placed in a National Database System for reference.

February, 1990

PS 019083

Abstract

Dialogue Journal Writing in Kindergarten Classrooms.
Lopez, Eileen B., 1990: Practicum Report, Nova University, The Center for the Advancement of Education.
Descriptors: Child Development/Child Language/Developmental Stages/Early Reading/Emergent Literacy/Kindergarten/Language Acquisition/Language Usage/Literacy Education/Primary Education/Reading Readiness/Writing Instruction/Writing Readiness/Written Language/Young Children/

The lack of daily journal writing opportunities for kindergarten and first grade students was addressed through a series of inservice sessions designed to encourage teachers to provide daily opportunities for journal writing as required by county guidelines. In order to make the activity more effective, teachers were asked to give students written feedback. A parent orientation session provided parents an overview of the goals and objectives of the daily journal writing project. Success of the project was measured through classroom observations, reviews of students' journals, comparison of students' pre and post samples and a parent survey. Results indicated that students were provided with daily journal writing opportunities with teachers writing responses twice weekly. Students showed significant gains in developmental writing levels. Parental reactions to daily journal writing and invented spellings by students were positive. Appendices include surveys used, developmental stages of children's writing and graphic analysis of pre and post writing samples.

Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. Where it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give this testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other workers in the field and in the hope that my work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

Signed Eileen B. Lopez

Table of Contents

Page

Title Page i

Abstract ii

Authorship Statement iii

Table of Contents iv

Practicum Observer Verification v

Chapters

I. Purpose 6

II. Research & Solution Strategy 16

III. Method 28

IV. Results 34

V. Recommendations 43

Reference List 45

Appendices 47

Appendix A: Daily Journal Writing Survey (Teacher's) . . 48

Appendix B: Developmental Stages of Children's Writing . 50

Appendix C: Parent Survey 52

Appendix D: Graphic Analysis 54

Dissemination Packet 56

CHAPTER I

Background

Recent research in the area of language acquisition has expanded our knowledge and understanding of reading and language arts instruction (Dyson, 1987; Ferreiro and Teberosky, 1982; Greene, 1985; Gunderson and Shapiro, 1986; Strackbein and Tillman, 1987). The whole language approach to reading and language arts instruction is a philosophy based on oral language/written language comparison studies. "These studies tell us that reading and writing abilities develop similarly to listening and speaking abilities," Nelson and Snow, as cited by Fields (1988, p. 898).

Previously, it was believed that if students learned the skills necessary to read and write they would become literate. Because of accountability requirements, districts have placed more emphasis on students' performances on standardized tests and state minimum competency tests, which measure skills. As a result, reading and language arts curricula have focused on the teaching of skills. Yet, there are students who can successfully demonstrate mastery of isolated skills who cannot read with any level of comprehension or write a complete sentence.

However, this bits and pieces approach to teaching reading and language arts is actually antithetical to the way language is

learned. According to Altwerger, Edelsky and Flores (1987),

> The key theoretical premise for whole language is that the world over, babies acquire a language through actually using it, not through practicing its separate parts until some later date when the parts are assembled and the totality is finally used (p. 145).

Anyone using language is using all systems in making meaning to accomplish purposes.

Whole language advocates an integrated, interrelated approach to instruction. It is a basic philosophy that requires practice, not a program, basal reader or kit. Emphasis is on immersing students in a language-rich, print-rich environment with lots of teacher-student, student-student interaction. Children are read to daily, read and handle books daily, write in journals about interests and experiences and participate in process writing individually or as part of a group. According to Brountas, in whole language instruction, "listening, speaking and writing are presented to children as related elements of a single unit, rather than as isolated elements of learning," (1987, p. 57).

During implementation of this project, this author was an assistant principal for elementary instruction at an elementary school in a large, diverse and growing school district in the southeastern part of the country. The leadership team embraced the philosophy of teacher empowerment, using a collaborative approach to planning and decision making. Teacher judgment and

input were valued and encouraged.

Duties and responsibilities of the author included assisting the principal with administrative tasks. In addition, as part of the instructional leadership team, much time was spent supervising and monitoring all aspects of curriculum, conducting teacher inservice training, coordinating special programs, testing, and making decisions regarding placement and pacing of students in the curriculum areas.

The school was one of 96 elementary schools in the district. It was a seven year old, well maintained facility, located in a suburban, affluent neighborhood in the southeast part of the district. The school staff included the principal, assistant principal, guidance counselor, primary specialist, forty-two regular education and special education teachers, nine teacher aides, a secretary, two clerks, eight custodians, eight lunchroom staff members and two lunchroom aides.

Student enrollment was 960. There were four kindergarten units, seven first grade, eight second grade, six third grade, five fourth grade and six fifth grade units. The socioeconomic background of the student body was sixty percent middle to upper middle income, forty percent lower middle to lower income. The racial and ethnic composition was mostly White Caucasian. Twenty percent of the students were of Black or Hispanic origin. Parent

occupations ranged from professionals (doctors, lawyers, etc.) to large land owners, rural farmers, migrants and carnival workers.

This project was targeted to the kindergarten and first grade populations. There were 120 kindergarten students and 180 first grade students enrolled at the target school during implementation of the project.

An Elementary Reading and Language Arts Resource Guide was published in the fall of 1988 by the school district in which this project was implemented. An official commitment to an integrated approach to reading and language arts instruction was made in the district philosophy which appears in the guide. The guide included district policies and recommendations for reading and language arts instruction for use by all elementary schools in the district.

A Developmental Writing Program (DWP), a process approach to writing instruction in the elementary grades, had been widely used in the district since 1982. In 1987 DWP was officially adopted as the elementary writing curriculum in the district. DWP is, however, a process rather than a set program. It relies heavily on students' experiences as the basis for composition. An emphasis is placed on oral composition with the teacher as recorder, group authoring, editing, rewriting and transitions to individual authoring as students develop expertise and demonstrate

readiness. Daily journal writing by students is an integral part of the process. All first grade teachers of language arts received intensive inservice in the process of teaching DWP, along with an on-site follow-up component. Other elementary teachers also received DWP training.

The kindergarten program in the district was also committed to a whole language approach to instruction. In the fall of 1988, DWP was extended to the kindergarten program. The Wright Big Books, a literature based whole language series was added to the kindergarten curriculum. The series was to serve as a springboard for group reading, critical thinking and group and individual authoring of original stories. Writing centers and daily journal writing by students were recommended as vital parts of the instructional process. All kindergarten teachers received inservice in the DWP and Wright Big Books curriculum during the 1988-89 school year.

In the 1987-88 school year an Applied Language Arts (ALA) program for first grade was piloted in several schools in the district. The following year it was extended to include more of the elementary schools in the district. The school at which this project was implemented was among those schools. In the 1989-90 school year, a second grade ALA program was added at the school.

The ALA program was based on a whole language approach to

reading and language arts instruction. In addition to the regular reading series, students were instructed using specific strategies that integrated critical thinking skills with reading and language arts. Works of literature were incorporated from various sources and used as springboards to discussions, problem solving, and writing. Writing centers, daily journal writing, projects and arts and crafts were recommended as alternatives to traditional seatwork for these students.

At the end of the 1988-89 school year 25 kindergarten students were identified as needing extended readiness in first grade. These students were screened using the Dallas Preschool Screening Test, Dallas Educational Services (1976). These students were referred to the kindergarten diagnostician who conducted more intensive testing and evaluation. Language development is a primary deficit area for these students. A whole language multi-sensory approach is the recommended strategy for helping these students attain appropriate gains in language development.

Through routine observations of kindergarten and first grade classrooms it was possible to determine that teachers were teaching the DMP group writing process. However, a review of lesson plans indicated that it was not occurring on a regular and consistent basis. Class stories were published and placed in classroom libraries in one third of the classrooms. In first

grade, transition from writing class stories to individual authoring and publishing of books was not occurring as students developed readiness to do so. Kindergarten teachers were using the Wright Big Book materials in an interactive process that included reading to the students, engaging in discussions that involved higher level thinking processes in relating literature to students' experiences, predicting, making inferences, whole group and individual student reading. Opportunities for individual student authoring of stories were not apparent, i.e., writing centers. There was no evidence that the students were engaging in daily journal writing on a regular basis.

In June of 1989 kindergarten and first grade teachers were surveyed to determine whether students were given opportunities to participate in journal writing. Teachers were also asked how frequently and what types of feedback students were given. The survey was developed by the author to provide the information necessary to determine a need for this project (Appendix A:38). All but one of the teachers provided opportunities for journal writing. Students participated on an average of 1.9 times weekly, for an average of 6 months of the school year. Students were given feedback an average of 1.7 times per week. This was not written feedback. Sharing and feedback were accomplished by having students read journal entries to the entire class.

Conversations with teachers revealed concerns that despite participation in DMP training, teachers did not feel confident in helping students make the transition from group authoring to individual student authoring. Journal writing was difficult for teachers to manage because of time constraints, and fears of negative parental reactions to invented spelling and scribbling in children's writing.

Teachers should have been providing daily opportunities for journal writing by students, as required by county guidelines for kindergarten and first grade classrooms. In other words, students should have been writing in journals 5 times per week. Teachers should have, ideally, provided written feedback daily. Realistically, teachers should be expected to provide written feedback at least twice weekly.

The discrepancy was in the number of times weekly that opportunities for writing were provided to students and the number of times weekly that written feedback was given by teachers. A discrepancy of an average of 3.1 times per week in relation to student journal entries was evident and a discrepancy of 2.0 times per week in relation to written teacher feedback was evident. The author proposed to reduce this discrepancy.

The author proposed to solve the problems previously described through inservice training, brainstorming, sharing and

collaborative planning with the kindergarten and first grade teachers. In accordance with the leadership philosophy of the school, the most successful resolutions of problems have occurred when the parties involved have been given opportunities for input and decision making. The following outcome objectives were proposed.

1. Over a period of 10 weeks, by participating in four hour-long inservice sessions, the target teachers will increase the amount of time devoted to journal writing by students to a minimum of 20 minutes daily as observed by the assistant principal through scheduled classroom observations and reviews of student journals.
2. Over a period of 10 weeks, the target teachers will, as a result of participating in four hour-long inservice sessions, increase response writing in students' journals to at least twice weekly as observed by the assistant principal during scheduled classroom observations and reviews of student journals.
3. During a period of 10 weeks, target kindergarten and first grade students will gain one developmental writing level as measured by comparing the students' developmental stage at the beginning and end of the 10 week period. Writing samples will be taken, dated and evaluated

according to the developmental stages of children's writing as identified by Hipple (1985, p. 258, Appendix B: 40).

4. After attending an orientation session, parents will have positive reactions toward dialogue journal writing and students' scribbling and invented spellings as measured by the completion of a parent opinion survey at the end of the session (Appendix C:42).

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

Research

Daily journal writing in early childhood classrooms came into use as research on children's acquisition of language began to lead towards a holistic approach to reading and language arts instruction as the most effective method (Greene, 1985; Ferreiro and Teberosky, 1982; Sulzby, 1985; Gunderson and Shapiro, 1986). Whole language as an instructional approach differs from other approaches in that it is not a kit, basal or program that can be purchased and taught lesson by lesson. In contrast, it is a philosophy that permeates the entire reading and language arts curricula. Newman described whole language as "a philosophical stance" (1985, p. 1). Whole language is a system of beliefs that translates into the integration of daily curricula rather than the teaching of separate subjects.

It was once believed that children would learn to write only as a result of sequential language arts skills instruction. What the research is now saying is that learning to write is part of the natural process of language acquisition, acquired by young children in much the same way as spoken language develops. Greene (1985) developed a project, using a postal system as a means of

learning what was involved when children learned to correspond and interact with others through writing. Greene emphasized the importance of "using what children already know about language in the effort to move them into new areas of literary development" (p. 202). One significant finding from this study was that children need opportunities to talk on paper just as they need opportunities to talk the spoken language in order to become more comfortable with written language.

In a study, comparing the writing development of preschool and kindergarten four to six year olds receiving no systematic writing instruction to a group of 28 first graders receiving systematic writing instruction, Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982, p. 248) found "no great differences between responses from first graders and those from preschoolers." Apparently, young children's attempts to independently make meaning of language, as the transition to written symbols is made, are at least as effective as formal writing instruction in the acquisition of writing ability. Another significant finding from this study was that no differences in learning gains were found between the two groups. Both first graders and preschoolers developed, passing, conceptually, through the same developmental stages of writing. The researchers concluded that the beginning levels of conceptualization of young children upon entering first grade were

the main determinants in whether students learned to write by the end of the school year.

Sulzby (1985), in related studies of kindergartners' emergent literacy, found that "many kindergartners enter school with a wide and complex range of knowledges and abilities as writers and readers" (p. 144). However, it was also found that typical school expectations do not match the students' prior knowledge. Another finding was that those students who were at conceptually higher levels were able to succeed, regardless of the developmental appropriateness of the curriculum. However, success levels for less advantaged students, taught using conventional models of reading and writing instruction which may not be developmentally appropriate, were much lower than those for middle class students. Sulzby suggested

> that these students may need programs that are more like the kind of instruction and discovery that middle class children are getting at home and from other sources prior to kindergarten (1985, p. 196).

Gunderson and Shapiro (1986) recorded observations of two first grade classrooms in a middle class suburb of Vancouver, British Columbia. Fifty-two students were involved in whole language instruction, including daily writing in log books. One result of whole language instruction was the rapid learning of more mature forms of writing. Students' writing ability was

evaluated according to developmental stages at the beginning and ending of the school year. Original student work contained 18 times the number of words found in a typical first grade basal reader. Also, a higher number of words drawn from students' interests and experiences were found. The importance of parents' understanding of the rationale was stressed. Otherwise, parents may have negative reactions to children's uncorrected writings with invented spellings.

Shuy (1985), based on studies of dialect issues, teachers' attitudes toward linguistic differences, and classroom language functions, described dialogue journal writing as "interactive, functional and self generated" (p. 894). Shuy stressed that this type of writing is not only conversational in tone, but produces more discussion of important topics. Also, students were engaged in increased amounts of "personal fact reporting, opinions and higher order functions" as well as "doubling the amount of questions they ask the teacher in dialogue writing" (p. 895).

Milz (1981) used dialogue journal writing with first graders and considered it an integral part of whole language instruction. Students were allowed to use the journals as wished. Milz gave students feedback in the form of written responses, but never corrected the journal writing. The journals did provide a daily

record of writing development that was helpful in evaluating and diagnosing student needs. Another result was that the teacher's written responses to students enhanced parental understanding of the journal writing process.

Strackbein and Tillman (1987) reported similar results with the use of dialogue journal writing in the classroom. In addition, brief scheduled periods for journal writing were recommended as being most effective. The writers stressed that journals gave students opportunities to "practice saying what they mean" (p. 31) and that teachers were provided with feedback as to how students have internalized and applied concepts previously taught.

Hipple (1985) studied 23 kindergartners, who were nonreaders, to determine whether students could write before they learned to read. This study revealed that journal writing with kindergartners gave insights into students' ideas and thought processes. Students progressed in writing development, as well as speaking, reading and writing skills.

In observations of first graders, Haley-James (1982) found that

> children are ready to write when they understand what writing does, when they are interested in writing, when they want to communicate through writing, and when they understand that written symbols represent meaning (p. 462).

Participation in daily dialogue journal writing can help provide students with the type of experiences that help develop the prerequisites for writing readiness.

Dyson (1987) stressed that teachers must concern themselves with "how children's products and processes grow within the patterns of individual children's lives" (p. 649). Interactions with symbols, speech and people are viewed by Dyson as a revelation of individual children's styles in the classroom. Journal writing becomes interactive when teachers respond in writing. As young children write in journals, practices at making sense of written symbols are revealed.

Sulzby and Teale (1985), based on insights gained from studies of young children's emergent literacy, recommended developmentally appropriate curriculum for kindergarten and first grade students. Emphasis was placed on the fact that instruction must be based on "the sometimes substantial foundation of skills young children already have when they enter school" (p. 11). Also, the researchers encouraged the involvement of students in informal, whole language oriented activities on a daily basis.

According to Goodman (1985), young children learn language through the use of language. Reading gives children avenues for expression of ideas, while writing reveals the impact and power of ideas. Goodman drew conclusions from personally conducted

research studies on how children learn to read and write, observations by teachers and parents and reviews of related research.

Haley-James (1982) suggested that young writers need an audience in order to remain motivated to write. The discovery of how writing influences others may be a part of that motivation. Teacher written responses in students' journals can provide an audience, thereby motivating students with the implied message that writing is important.

Parental understanding of the importance of a whole language approach to instruction and dialogue journal writing can play a vital part in the success level of the approach. In studies of parents' perceptions of young children's literacy, Hiebert and Adams (1987) found that at the preschool stage, there are definite discrepancies between parents' perceptions and young children's performances. The authors concluded that "this situation could become even more difficult as children make the transition from home to school" (p. 36). In this study parents more accurately estimated highly visible skills than less apparent cognitive skills. This might be one explanation for the tendency of some parents to equate the quality of education with the number of paper and pencil tasks a teacher assigns. Based on the findings of this study, it became apparent to the author that ungraded

students' writing could meet with negative parental reactions unless the writing includes some form of written response by the teacher.

Solution Strategy

The author recognized the fact that asking teachers to implement whole language instructional strategies, without providing inservice training and support, could have created feelings of discomfort. As discussed previously, whole language is a system of beliefs that drives the curriculum. Skills instruction, in a bits and pieces fashion, had become comfortable for many teachers because it was familiar. Also, isolated skills instruction had been encouraged by many districts and administrators as a means to raise test scores. Essentially, curriculum was being driven by achievement tests instead of what was developmentally appropriate for students.

Teachers, at the target school, had become accustomed to having input when important decisions involving students and instructional strategies were made. Participation in a series of inservice sessions would enable kindergarten and first grade teachers to implement dialogue journal writing with students and would provide opportunities for teacher input. Also, a review of relevant research in the field, would help teachers recognize the

benefits to be gained by students from whole language instruction and dialogue journal writing. Opportunities for discussion, sharing and planning for implementation would afford additional support. The desired effect was that as teachers gained confidence and competence, comfort levels in implementation of dialogue journal writing would increase.

The last of the series of inservice sessions would deal with the developmental stages of children's preschool writing as identified by Hipple (1985, p. 258, Appendix B:40). Teachers would gain expertise in analyzing and evaluating students' writing, providing a means for measurement of gains in students' written language development. The addition of an evaluative perspective would aid teacher and parent recognition of benefits to students. In order to ease concerns about negative parental reactions to invented spellings by students and uncorrected student writings in journals, a parent orientation session would be scheduled. Knowledge of the goals and objectives of whole language instruction and the impact parental attitudes can have on students' progress would reduce the incidence of negative reactions by parents. Concrete suggestions for parents to use in dialoguing with children at home to support and enhance whole language instruction would enable parents to feel a vital part of students' emergent literacy.

The selection of this particular solution strategy was based on a number of factors. The need to meet county requirements in relation to providing daily journal writing opportunities for students was evident. Yet, in light of the nature of the leadership philosophy and decision making process in place at the school, valid teacher concerns were considered and addressed. It would have been counterproductive to direct teachers to follow requirements without opportunities for input, inservice training and administrative support. It was necessary for teachers to have opportunities for acquisition of knowledge and expertise in order to ensure success.

Providing a means for evaluation of students' writing would serve several purposes. Not only was evaluation necessary for measurement of this project, but it would also serve to reinforce the value of daily journal writing. It would provide teachers with documentation of students' writing gains which would be helpful with overall assessment of individual students' needs and in communicating with parents.

The addition of written teacher response would serve to give students an audience and give the message that writing is a meaningful and important activity. Also, written teacher response would clarify the students' writing for parents and indicate that, although not graded, the writing had been read by the teacher.

Since teachers were concerned with the possibility of negative parental reactions to ungraded student writing, it was desirable to include a parent component. Asking county level supervisors to address parents on the importance of daily journal writing by students would not only be cost efficient, but would serve to add an official seal of approval. An added positive note would be the opportunity for communication between parents and county level supervisors.

This solution strategy would not require much additional time expenditure by teachers or the researcher. Time spent on journal writing and teacher written response would fit into the language arts block. The researcher planned to offer teachers classroom relief time, following project completion, in exchange for some of the time spent in inservice training.

Data collection for this project would be easily accomplished. Time devoted daily to journal writing and teacher written response would be easily observed. The collection of the writing samples necessary for evaluation would be done as part of the regular school day. Time spent on parent involvement would be beneficial to all involved. When parents become partners in accomplishing school goals, students' learning is enhanced, parental frustrations are decreased and the work of the school becomes easier.

The last consideration was cost. The only materials necessary for journal writing would be a notebook and some type of appropriate writing instrument. These materials were the same basic materials used in classrooms daily. No additional personnel costs would be incurred. Teachers would devote time during the regular school day and monitoring would be accomplished as part of the author's duties.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The implementation of the Daily Dialogue Journal Writing Project involved all kindergarten and first grade teachers and students at the target school. Parents of the target students were also involved. The school principal and county level supervisors were invited to serve as guest speakers at a parent orientation.

Four hour-long inservice sessions were scheduled after school. The first inservice session provided teachers with an overview of highlights of the research review section of this proposal. Group discussion focused on concerns regarding the implementation of daily dialogue journal writing and possible resolutions were brainstormed. Also, teachers were given an overview and copy of the timeline for implementation of the Daily Dialogue Journal Writing Project. Because teachers were asked to use after school planning time for inservice training, the researcher offered teachers classroom relief time by teaching whole language writing activities in target classrooms at the end of the 10 week implementation period.

The topic of the second inservice session dealt with the evaluation of students' writing samples, according to the

developmental stages of preschool children's writing as identified by Hipple (1985, p. 258, Appendix B:40). Time was spent discussing the characteristics of each stage. Teachers were given the opportunity to practice evaluating samples of children's writings. Group discussions focused on comparing results for consistency. Teachers were asked to take writing samples from students, date and evaluate the samples according to the aforementioned developmental stages of writing, and bring the samples to the next inservice session. Implementation in target classrooms began after writing samples were taken.

At the third inservice session, time was provided for discussion of writing sample collection and evaluation. Time was also spent discussing and sharing dialogue journal writing experiences. The remainder of the session was devoted to the viewing and discussion of a district produced videotape dealing with recommended whole language modifications, including daily journal writing, to the existing reading and language arts program. Teachers were asked to collect, date and evaluate a second set of students' writing samples, following the procedure outlined at the first inservice session. Samples were to be discussed at the last inservice session.

The last inservice session was spent discussing students' writing progress. Writing samples were collected from teachers

for review by the researcher. Teachers completed a district inservice evaluation form.

Parents of target students were invited to attend an evening orientation session the week of the second teacher inservice session. A panel, consisting of county level supervisors and the school principal, addressed the implementation of daily journal writing as part of a whole language program in kindergarten and first grade classrooms. Scribbling and invented spellings in students' writings, as well as the fact that journals would not be graded by teachers were addressed. The use of written teacher feedback was also discussed. Suggestions for activities parents could use at home to reinforce and support whole language instruction were given to parents. An opinion survey was completed by parents at the end of the session (Appendix C:42).

Implementation of the project began in target classrooms the first school day after the second teacher inservice. Teachers devoted a minimum of 20 minutes daily to journal writing by students. At least twice a week, teachers gave each student written feedback in response to the students' journal entries. Implementation continued for a period of ten weeks.

The researcher scheduled observations twice a week in every classroom. Each target teacher was given a schedule of

observations. Students' journals were reviewed twice weekly.

The results of this project should prove useful to other administrators in implementing dialogue journal writing and other whole language instructional strategies with staffs who vary in levels of training and expertise in teaching the strategies. The researcher intends to share results with assistant principals at one of the assistant principal area meetings. In addition, the researcher serves as a member of the district's Reading and Language Arts Steering Committee and the Kindergarten Steering Committee. These committees establish goals and objectives and provide direction for the respective programs. The researcher will make results available to both of these groups for use in other schools throughout the district.

Timeline

1989-90

Week 1	First teacher inservice training session.
Week 2	Second teacher inservice training session.
	First collection of students' writing samples.
	Parent orientation session.
Weeks 3-8	Biweekly classroom observations of students' daily journal writing and teachers' response writing.
	Biweekly reviews of students' journals.

Week 10	Third teacher inservice training session.
	Biweekly classroom observations of students' journal writing and teachers' response writing.
	Biweekly reviews of students' journals.
Week 11	Biweekly classroom observations of students' journal writing and teachers' response writing.
	Biweekly reviews of students' journals.
Week 12	Biweekly classroom observations of students' daily journal writing and teachers' response writing.
	Biweekly reviews of students' journals.
	Last teacher inservice training session.
Week 13	Collect, analyze and interpret data.
	Evaluate.

Evaluation

The writer had originally planned to observe kindergarten and first grade teachers on a biweekly basis to determine that dialogue journal writing opportunities were being made available to students. Students' journals were also to be reviewed biweekly. Teachers' writing responses in students' journals were also to be observed during this time. Observations by the researcher began in November, after the second teacher inservice training session and the first collection and evaluation of

students' writing samples had been completed. All writing samples collected for this project were dated for purposes of differentiating between samples taken in November and those taken in January. Students' journals were to be reviewed biweekly. The writer found that due to additional administrative duties, it was impossible to conduct all observations, personally. The assistance of the Primary Specialist was solicited in conducting about one third of the observations. Students' writing samples were taken at the end of the ten week implementation period at the end of January. All writing samples were evaluated by teachers, according to the developmental stages of children's writing as identified by Hipple (1985, p. 258, Appendix B:40). The writer compared writing samples taken in November and samples taken in January for each student to determine developmental gains in students' writing ability. Positive parental reactions to students' dialogue journal writing, scribbling and invented spellings were measured through the use of a parent survey completed at the conclusion of the parent orientation session in October (Appendix C:42).

CHAPTER IV

Results

The results of this project were positive. Teachers did devote at least twenty minutes daily to journal writing by students. Exceptions were noted, only during exceptionally busy times, such as when special programs were scheduled and when students were absent. Teachers were observed by this author engaged in response writing in students' journals during the observations. Reviews of students' journals provided additional documentation that journal writing was occurring on a daily basis and teachers' response writing to students was occurring on a biweekly basis.

Due to other assigned duties and responsibilities, this author had difficulty making all of the planned scheduled observations within the timeframe of the regular school day. As a result, it became necessary to seek assistance from the Primary Specialist in making the observations. After familiarization with the goals and objectives of the project and the developmental stages of children's writing, the Primary Specialist was able to assist with about one-third of the planned observations.

After the first inservice session, this author experienced some moments of doubt in regard to the successful implementation of this project. One first grade teacher and one kindergarten

teacher were very opposed to participation in the inservice sessions if they were to extend beyond the contracted school day. As a result, the sessions were shortened from 60 minutes to 45 minutes.

During the sixth week of implementation, a meeting for first grade teachers was held with a representative of one of the book publishing companies from whom the school had purchased Big Book materials for use in first grade classrooms. As a result of previous inservice sessions teachers exhibited much knowledge, interest and excitement in regard to whole language instruction, journal writing by students and the possibility of adding Big Books and story innovation writing activities to the language arts block. Interestingly, the first grade teacher who was initially opposed to participation in the project was one of the teachers exhibiting the most enthusiasm.

Writing samples were taken from 111 kindergarten students and 149 first grade students at the beginning and end of the ten week implementation period. Any discrepancies between numbers of students enrolled and the number of students sampled was attributed to students absent on the day of sampling. Data compiled from the samples yielded the following results. Writing samples were classified according to the developmental stages of children's writing identified by Hipple (1985, pp. 258, Appendix

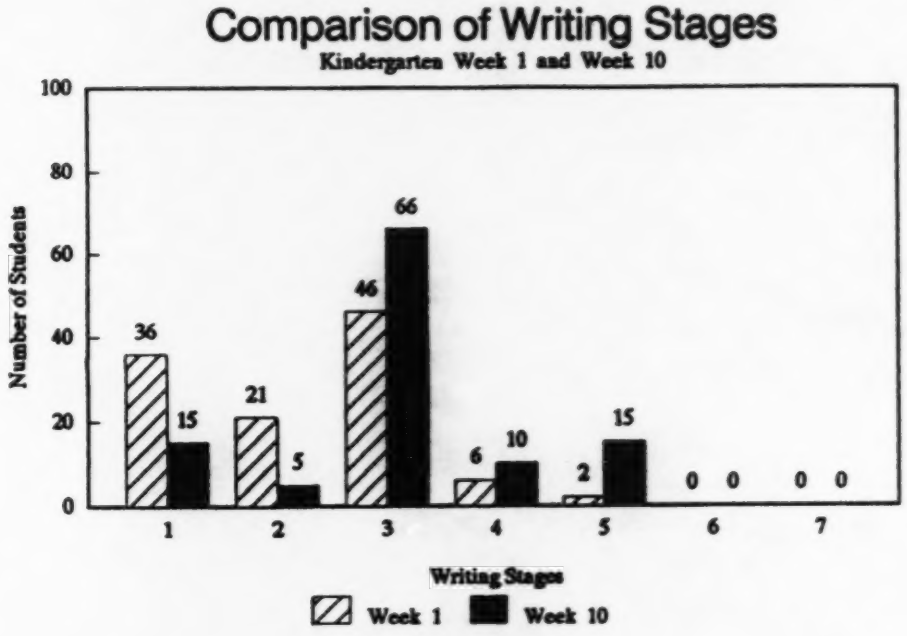
B:40).

At the beginning of the 10 week implementation period there were 38 kindergarten students at the nonwriting stage, 21 at the scribbling stage, 48 at the random lettering stage, six at the labeling and listing stage, and five at the invented spelling stage. There were no kindergarten students at the transitional stage or producing mature conventions of spelling and writing. At the end of the 10 week implementation period with students, there were 15 kindergarten students at the nonwriting stage, 5 at the scribbling stage, 65 at the random lettering stage, 10 at the labeling and listing stage and 15 at the invented spelling stage. There were no kindergarten students at the transitional stage or producing mature conventions of writing and spelling. A comparison of kindergarten results is given in Figure 1.

At the beginning of the 10 week implementation period with students, there were 13 first grade students at the nonwriting stage, four at the scribbling stage, 22 at the random lettering stage, 18 at the labeling and listing stage, 55 at the invented spelling stage, 29 at the transitional stage and eight producing mature conventions of spelling and writing. At the end of the 10 week implementation period with students, there was only one student at the nonwriting stage and no students were at the

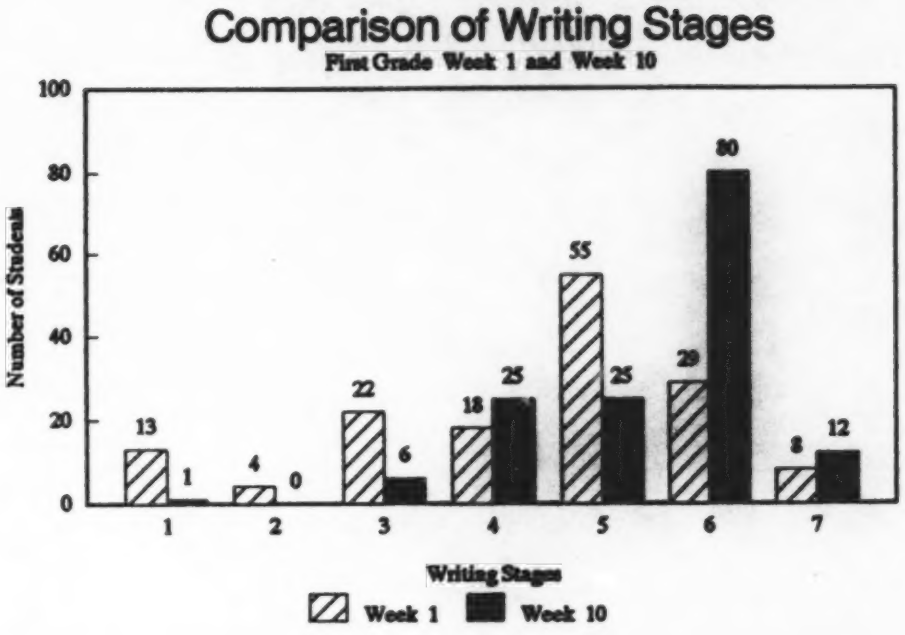
scribbling stage. There were six students at the random lettering stage, 25 students at the labeling and listing stage, 25 students at the invented spelling stage, 80 students at the transitional stage and twelve students producing mature conventions of spelling and writing. A comparison of first grade results is given in Figure 2.

Figure 1



Stage: 1–Nonwriting, 2–Scribbling, 3–Random Lettering, 4–Listing & Labeling, 5–Invented Spelling, 6–Transition and 7–Mature Conventions

Figure 2



Stage: 1–Nonwriting, 2–Scribbling, 3–Random Lettering, 4–Listing & Labeling, 5–Invented Spelling, 6–Transition and 7–Mature Conventions

Although not every student gained one developmental stage in writing development, a close analysis of the data reveals some significant gains. At the beginning of the implementation period, 51 percent of the kindergarten students and 26 percent of the first grade students were at a developmental writing stage below the third stage (nonwriting or scribbling). At the end of the

implementation period, the percentages of students below the third stage were reduced to 18 percent of the kindergarten students and five percent of the first grade students. The percentage of kindergartners at the random lettering stage increased from 42 percent to 60 percent. The number of first graders at the transitional stage increased from 19 percent to 53 percent.

Careful analysis of the data posed some interesting questions. There seemed to be at least one student in each of the classes that seemed to skip one or more stages of writing development. In Figures 3 and 4, examples of pre and post project writing samples, taken from a kindergarten boy who moved through two stages of writing development is given.

Figure 3
Kindergarten Boy Week 1

Figure 4
Kindergarten Boy Week 10

A comparison of the two samples reveals that this kindergarten boy moved from the random lettering stage of writing development to the invented spelling stage of writing development in the 10 week duration of the project, skipping the labeling and listing stage. In Figures 5 and 6, pre and post writing samples, taken from a first grade boy are shown. This example illustrates an even more dramatic gain in writing development.

Figure 5
First Grade Boy Week 1

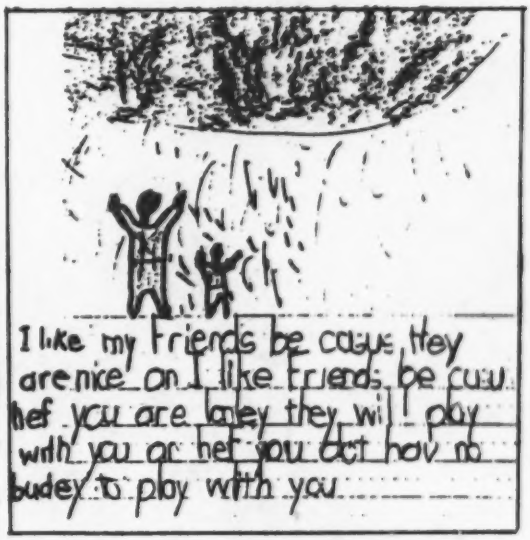

I like my friends be cause they
are nice on I like friends be cuu
hef you are lonely they wil play
with you or hef you dot hov no
budey to play with you

Figure 6
First Grade Boy Week 10

This first grader progressed from the random lettering stage to the transitional stage of writing development in the same 10 week period. Would more students have skipped a writing stage if final

writing samples had been taken and compared after a longer implementation period? Also, it was not possible to conclude from the data if the beginning stage of the students skipping stages was a determinant factor or if skipping stages just occurs randomly within a given population.

There were 20 parents and two teachers present at the parent orientation session. The panel consisted of the district's reading supervisor and the area's generalist supervisor as well as the principal of the school and this author. Parents were given information on the benefits to children from daily journal writing as part of a whole language instructional program. Developmental stages of children's writing and the use of invented spellings by students was also addressed. Opportunities for questions and answers resulted in lively dialogue among parents and panel members. Parental reactions to the meeting were very positive. Several requests were made for more meetings of this type. The opportunity for communication between school officials and parents in matters directly related to parent concerns was appreciated by parents. All responses on the parent surveys were positive.

In summary, three out of four outcome objectives were achieved. Kindergarten and first grade teachers devoted a minimum of 20 minutes daily to journal writing by students and wrote responses in students' journals at least twice weekly, satisfying

criteria for objectives one and two. Parents attending the parent orientation session expressed positive reactions toward dialogue journal writing and students' scribbling and invented spellings. In this author's opinion objective three could have been successfully achieved within a longer implementation period. However, within the design of this project, objective three was not achieved.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

After analysis of the final data, the author realized that although many positive results were apparent, more time is necessary to fully evaluate the progress of students' developmental gains in writing ability. Present plans include continued classroom observations and review of students' journals for the remainder of the school year in order to encourage the continuance of dialogue journal writing. Writing samples will be collected, evaluated and compared to January samples in March, 1990 and June, 1990 to determine further developmental gains in students' writing ability. It is anticipated that all students will have achieved a gain of at least one stage in writing development by the end of the school year. It is also anticipated that many of the students in the transitional stage will have moved into producing mature conventions of spelling and writing. Based on the results so far it is likely that many more students will have skipped a stage in writing development.

Others planning a similar project should keep in mind that the observation schedule was an ambitious one. It was difficult for an assistant principal of an elementary school of almost 1000 students with a busy schedule and a wide range of responsibilities

to conduct two observations weekly in each of 11 classrooms. Evaluation could have been accomplished with one observation weekly and biweekly reviews of students' journals.

A presentation will be planned for the entire faculty to share results. It is hoped that teachers on other grade levels, after seeing the results achieved with kindergarten and first grade students, will be encouraged to implement dialogue journal writing. Contingent on approval by the principal and district level supervisors, a presentation will be offered to the area assistant principals for elementary instruction at one of the area meetings. All information will be shared with school staff, principal and district level supervisors, as well as the district's Reading and Language Arts Steering Committee and Kindergarten Steering Committee.

References Listed

Altwerger, Bess, Carole Edelsky, and Barbara M. Flores. "Whole Language: What's New?" The Reading Teacher. November, 1987, pp. 144-154.

Brountas, Maria. "Whole Language Really Works." Teaching K-8. November/December, 1987, pp. 57-60.

Dyson, Anne Haas. "Research Currents: The Emergence of Children's Written Voices." Language Arts. October, 1987, pp. 648-658.

Ferreiro, Emilia and Ana Teberosky. Literacy Before Schooling. Exeter, New Hampshire: Heinemann Educational Books, 1982.

Fields, Marjorie V. "Talking and Writing: Explaining the Whole Language Approach to Parents." The Reading Teacher. May, 1988, pp. 898-903.

Goodman, Yetta. "Developing Writing in a Literate Society." Educational Horizons. Fall, 1985, pp. 17-21.

Greene, Jennifer. "Children's Writing in an Elementary Postal System." In Advances In Writing Research, Volume I, Children's Early Writing Development, edited by Marcia Farr. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex, 1985, pp. 201-296.

Gunderson, Lee and Jon Shapiro. "Whole Language Instruction: Writing in 1st Grade." The Reading Teacher. January, 1988, pp. 430-437.

Haley-James, Shirley. "When Are Children Ready to Write?" Language Arts. May, 1982, pp. 458-463.

Hiebert, Elfrieda H. and Cindy S. Adams. "Fathers' and Mothers' Perceptions of Their Preschool Children's Emergent Literacy." Journal of Experimental Child Psychology. August, 1987, pp.25-37.

Hipple, Marjorie L. "Journal Writing in Kindergarten." Language Arts. March, 1985, pp. 255-261.

Milz, Vera E. "First Graders Can Write: Focus On Communication." Theory Into Practice. Summer, 1980, pp. 179-185.

Newman, Judith M. Whole Language: Theory in Use. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1985, pp. 1-36.

Shuy, Roger W. "Research Currents: Dialogue as the Heart of Learning." Language Arts. December, 1987, pp. 890-897.

Strackbein, Deanna and Montague Tillman. "Journals Without Reservations." Journal of Reading. October, 1987, pp. 28-31.

Sulzby, Elizabeth. "Kindergartners as Writers and Readers." In Advances in Writing Research Volume One, Children's Early Writing Development, edited by Marcia Farr. Norwood, New Jersey, Ablex, 1985, pp. 127-199.

Sulzby, Elizabeth and William H. Teale. "Writing Development in Early Childhood." Educational Horizons. Fall, 1985, pp. 8-12.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Daily Journal Writing Survey (Teachers)

Appendix A

Daily Journal Writing Survey (Teachers)

Circle one answer for each item below.

Did you allow time for daily journal writing by students this year?

Yes No

Average number of times students engaged in journal writing weekly:

5 4 3 2 1 0

Daily average duration of time students were engaged in journal writing?

more than 20 mins. 20 mins. less than 20 mins.

How many times per week did students receive written teacher feedback ,in relation to daily journal writing?

5 4 3 2 1 0

Circle all months in which students engaged in journal writing.

Aug. Sept. Oct. Nov. Dec. Jan. Feb. Mar. Apr. May June

What was the nature of the teacher feedback? Please specify.

_____

_____

Thank you for your help in completing this survey.

Appendix B

Developmental Stages of Children's Writing

1. Nonwriting. Drawing stories with no accompanying text.
2. Scribbling. Attempts to emulate the line, shape, and direction of traditional writing.
3. Random lettering. The printing of random letters.
4. Labeling and listing. Reproducing numerals, proper names, or other words either from memory or from print sources seen. These may appear singly or repeated in lists that have no narrative content.
5. Invented spellings. Demonstrating beginning phonemic segmentation skills by writing words with some consonant sounds spelled out. More advanced forms of invented spellings include some vowels.
6. Transitional spelling. A middle stage that consists of a mix of conventional and invented spellings.
7. Producing mature conventions of spelling and writing (Hipple, 1985, p. 258).

Appendix C

PARENT SURVEY

Please circle your responses to the following statements:

My feelings about Daily Journal Writing can be described as:

very positive very negative

1 2 3 4 5

My feelings about children's writing containing scribbling and invented spellings with written teacher's comments can be described as:

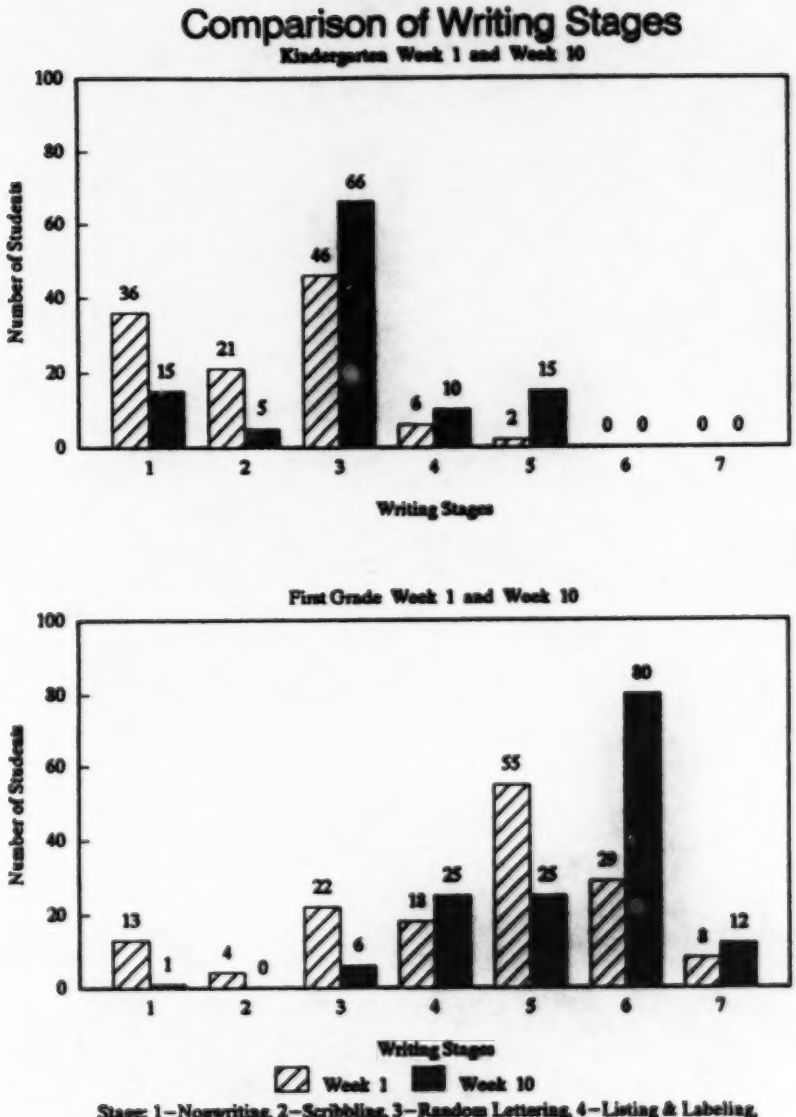
very positive very negative

1 2 3 4 5

If you would like more information or have misgivings about the procedure, please sign up at the table in the back of the room so that we can schedule a conference at your convenience.

Appendix D

Graphic Analysis



Stage: 1–Nonwriting, 2–Scribbling, 3–Random Lettering, 4–Listing & Labeling, 5–Invented Spelling, 6–Transition and 7–Mature Conventions

Dear Alumni,

Enclosed are copies of information that might be useful to those with an interest in daily dialogue journal writing in early childhood classrooms. Enclosed is an annotated bibliography of articles that can be used as a reference to begin building a knowledge base on related research. In addition, a copy of the abstract for the Dialogue Journal Writing in Kindergarten and First Grade Classrooms project and copies of the appendices are enclosed.

It is hoped that those contemplating a similar project will find this information useful. It is also hoped that all children in early childhood classrooms could be afforded the benefits of interacting with adults through daily journal writing. When young children are given the opportunity to practice talking in writing, the development of literacy will be enhanced.

Sincerely,

Eileen B. Lopez

Eileen B. Lopez

Abstract

Dialogue Journal Writing in Kindergarten Classrooms.
Lopez, Eileen B., 1990: Practicum Report, Nova University, The Center for the Advancement of Education.
Descriptors: Child Development/Child Language/Developmental Stages/Early Reading/Emergent Literacy/Kindergarten/Language Acquisition/Language Usage/Literacy Education/Primary Education/Reading Readiness/Writing Instruction/Writing Readiness/Written Language/Young Children/

The lack of daily journal writing opportunities for kindergarten and first grade students was addressed through a series of inservice sessions designed to encourage teachers to provide daily opportunities for journal writing as required by county guidelines. In order to make the activity more effective, teachers were asked to give students written feedback. A parent orientation session provided parents an overview of the goals and objectives of the daily journal writing project. Success of the project was measured through classroom observations, reviews of students' journals, comparison of students' pre and post samples and a parent survey. Results indicated that students were provided with daily journal writing opportunities with teachers writing responses twice weekly. Students showed significant gains in developmental writing levels. Parental reactions to daily journal writing and invented spellings by students were positive. Appendices include surveys used, developmental stages of children's writing and graphic analysis of pre and post writing samples.

Annotated Bibliography

Whole Language Approach to Teaching Reading and Language Arts

Altwerger, Bess, Carole Edelsky, and Barbara M. Flores. "Whole Language: What's New?" The Reading Teacher. November, 1987, pp. 144-154.

This article examines the issue of what Whole Language is and is not. The author looks at whole language in terms of likenesses and differences to other educational methods and theories. Whole language is described, from a historical perspective, as an outgrowth of the best of a number of instructional theories and methods.

Brountas, Maria. "Whole Language Really Works." Teaching K-8. November/December, 1987, pp. 57-60.

The article gives an overview of whole language as an instructional approach. The author gives specific ideas and suggestions on translating the essential elements of whole language into successful classroom implementation. Curriculum integration, materials, student assessment, evaluation and parent involvement are among the topics addressed in terms of whole language classroom implementation.

Gunderson, Lee and Jon Shapiro. "Whole Language Instruction: Writing in 1st Grade." The Reading Teacher. January, 1988, pp. 430-437.

In this article the advantages and disadvantages of using a whole language program in first grade are examined. The authors base recommendations on observations made in two first grade classrooms in Vancouver, British Columbia. The article ends with a caution that whole language can be difficult to implement and a belief by the authors that the benefits are just beginning to unfold.

Young Children's Writing Development

Dyson, Anne Haas. "Research Currents: The Emergence of Children's Written Voices." Language Arts. October, 1987, pp. 648-658.

In this article the idea that understanding of young children's writings comes from an examination of more than patterns of spellings, sentences and other writing conventions was emphasized. Rather, the author stressed that children's "written voices" evolve from experiences and interactions within the boundaries of the young child's world. In addition, the young child's individual style and personality has an influence on those interactions and as a result, writing styles are influenced. Interactions with symbols were seen as revelations of individual styles. The young child's attempts to control interactions within his world are entwined with attempts to make sense of the intricacies of written language.

Goodman, Yetta. "Developing Writing in a Literate Society." Educational Horizons. Fall, 1985, pp. 17-21.

The author of this article makes recommendations on the development of young children's writings based on personally conducted research studies on the emergence of literacy in young children. In addition, the author reviewed related research and documented observations by teachers and parents of how young children learn to read and write. According to the author, children learn language through the use of language. The development of the principles of writing in young children, the function that written language serves in the lives of young children, the organization of young children's written language, as well as the representation of meaning are topics explored in the article.

Haley-James, Shirley. "When Are Children Ready to Write?" Language Arts. May, 1982, pp. 458-463.

Preschool experiences that serve to encourage the development of writing in young children are discussed in this article. Two conditions are described as necessary if young children are to develop an interest in writing. According to the author, Young children must be immersed in an environment where people write and show an interest in the writings of others and there should be no adult interference in children's pleasure in early attempts to

write. Suggestions for evaluating levels of young children's writings are also discussed.

Milz, Vera E. "First Graders Can Write: Focus On Communication." Theory Into Practice. Summer, 1980, pp. 179-185.

In this article the development of written language is likened to the development of oral language. The author describes language instruction in a first grade classroom. Listening, speaking, reading and writing develop as the need arises within the context of real situations. Communication is viewed as the motivating factor in learning language, with each segment mutually supportive and interactive.

Journal Writing In Early Childhood Classrooms

Hipple, Marjorie L. "Journal Writing In Kindergarten." Language Arts. March, 1985, pp. 255-261.

This article states that kindergarten students, given the opportunity to write daily in journals, are able to write. The author concludes from results of this study of 23 kindergarten students, that journal writing also enhances progress in related language arts development such as speaking, listening and reading. In addition, journal writing reveals insights into students' ideas and thought processes.

Shuy, Roger W. "Research Currents: Dialogue as the Heart of Learning." Language Arts. December, 1987, pp. 880-887.

In this article the communicative role that dialogue journal writing can play between teachers and students is discussed. This type of writing is more conversational in tone than other types of writing, providing a vehicle for social interaction as well as enhancing language development. Dialogue journal writing is described as interactive, functional and self-generated.

Strackbein, Deanna and Montague Tillman. "Journals Without Reservations." Journal of Reading. October, 1987, pp. 29-31.

The authors of this article report that brief scheduled periods for journal writing with written teacher feedback were most effective with first grade students. The journals provide a written record of students internalization and application of previously taught material. Teachers' reservations about students' misspelled words are addressed and suggestions are given for resolution of those misgivings.

Appendix A

Daily Journal Writing Survey (Teachers)

Circle one answer for each item below.

Did you allow time for daily journal writing by students this year?

Yes No

Average number of times students engaged in journal writing weekly:

5 4 3 2 1 0

Daily average duration of time students were engaged in journal writing?

more than 20 mins. 20 mins. less than 20 mins.

How many times per week did students receive written teacher feedback ,in relation to daily journal writing?

5 4 3 2 1 0

Circle all months in which students engaged in journal writing.

Aug. Sept. Oct. Nov. Dec. Jan. Feb. Mar. Apr. May June

What was the nature of the teacher feedback? Please specify.

_____

_____

Thank you for your help in completing this survey.

Appendix B

Developmental Stages of Children's Writing

Appendix B

Developmental Stages of Children's Writing

1. Nonwriting. Drawing stories with no accompanying text.
2. Scribbling. Attempts to emulate the line, shape, and direction of traditional writing.
3. Random lettering. The printing of random letters.
4. Labeling and listing. Reproducing numerals, proper names, or other words either from memory or from print sources seen. These may appear singly or repeated in lists that have no narrative content.
5. Invented spellings. Demonstrating beginning phonemic segmentation skills by writing words with some consonant sounds spelled out. More advanced forms of invented spellings include some vowels.
6. Transitional spelling. A middle stage that consists of a mix of conventional and invented spellings.
7. Producing mature conventions of spelling and writing (Hipple, 1985, p. 258).

Appendix C

PARENT SURVEY

Please circle your responses to the following statements:

My feelings about Daily Journal Writing can be described as:

very positive very negative

1 2 3 4 5

My feelings about children's writing containing scribbling and invented spellings with written teacher's comments can be described as:

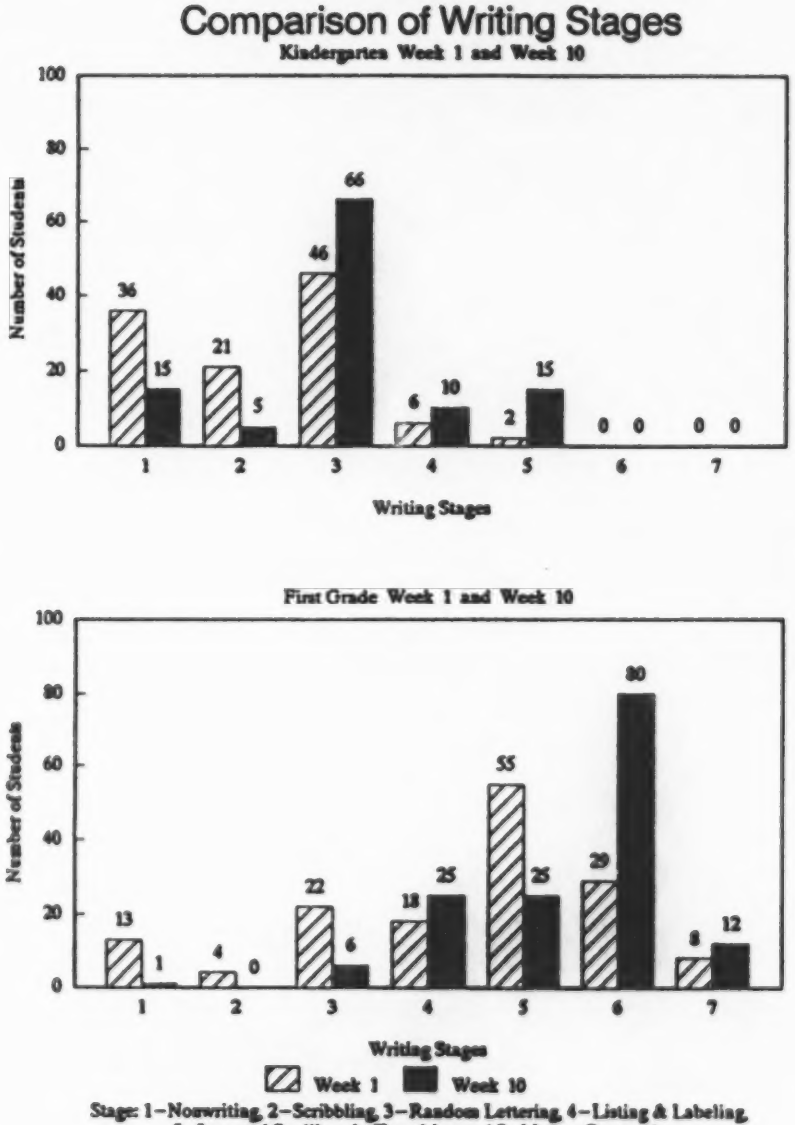
very positive very negative

1 2 3 4 5

If you would like more information or have misgivings about the procedure, please sign up at the table in the back of the room so that we can schedule a conference at your convenience.

Appendix D

Graphic Analysis



Stage: 1–Nonwriting, 2–Scribbling, 3–Random Lettering, 4–Listing & Labeling, 5–Invented Spelling, 6–Transition and 7–Mature Conventions